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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-46 (Canceled).

47. (Currently Amended) An article of footwear comprising:

- a first energy return plate extending from a toe area of the foot and terminating at an arch area of the foot;
- a second energy return plate independent from the first plate and spaced a predetermined distance from the first plate, the second energy return plate extending from the toe area of the foot and terminating at the arch area of the foot;
- a first elastomeric separating element connecting the first and second plates forward of an area of the footwear corresponding to the ball of the foot;
- a second elastomeric separating element connecting the first and second plates behind the area corresponding to the ball of the foot and forward of an area corresponding to the heel to maintain the spacing between said plates during a gait cycle of a wearer comprising a heel-toe strike, ~~a midstance~~ and a toe off, the first and second elastomeric elements forming a void between the first and second plates and wherein;
- ~~during heel strike the heel portion of the first plate deforms downward and the arch portion of the first plate deforms upward;~~
- ~~during midstance the arch portion of both the first and second plates deform downward and the heel portion of the first plate recovers to a non-deformed state rocking the wearer forward~~ during toe strike the toe portion of both the first and second plates deforms upward; and
- during toe off the first and second plates recover to the non-deformed state releasing stored energy into a step forward and upward propelling the wearer forward.

48. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, wherein said first and second plates comprise a material having a modulus of elasticity of at least approximately 10×10^6 lb/in².

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49. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, wherein said elastomeric separating elements comprise a material having a tensile strength at least 2000 psi.

50. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, further comprising a hollow space without separating elements between the first and second plates in the area corresponding to the ball of the foot.

51. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, wherein said first one of said separating elements is generally arcuate.

52. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, wherein the separating elements allow the first and second plates to move with respect to one another in a medial lateral direction.

53. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, wherein the separating elements allow the first and second plates to rotate with respect to one another in a torsional direction.

54. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 47, wherein the void between the first and second plate allows the plates to deform to a height of the void.

55. (Previously Presented) An article of footwear comprising:
an upper;
a sole having a ground engaging portion and an energy return system between the upper and the sole;
the energy return system comprising:
an upper plate and a lower plate spaced a predetermined distance from each plate, the plates having arch and toe portions and terminating at the arch area of the foot, respectively, the upper and lower plates made from an elastic material of high tensile

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strength, the plates independently deformable and recoverable from arch portion to toe portion; and

two elastomeric elements, one disposed between the toe portion of the plates and the other disposed between the arch portion of the plates to maintain the spacing between said plates during a gait cycle of a wearer comprising a toe strike and a toe off the first and second elastomeric elements forming a void between the upper and lower plates and wherein;

during toe strike the toe portion of both the upper and lower plates deforms upward; and

during toe off, the upper and lower plates recover to the non-deformed state releasing stored energy into a step forward and upward propelling the wearer forward.

56. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 55, wherein the upper plate has a lateral side and a medial, and wherein during toe off the deformation of the toe portion of the upper plate shifts from the lateral side to the medial side.

57. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 55, wherein one of the two elastomeric elements is positioned at a posterior end of the upper and lower plates.

58. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 55, wherein said upper and lower plates comprise a material having a modulus of elasticity of at least approximately 32×10^6 lb/in².

59. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 58, wherein said material comprises carbon graphite.

60. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 59, wherein said upper plate and lower plates are formed by a plurality of layers of carbon graphite.

61. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 55, wherein said first one of said separating elements is generally arcuate.

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62. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 55, wherein one of the separating elements is located entirely forward of a ball of a wearer's foot.

63. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of claim 55, wherein the toe portion of the upper plate deflects downward before the upper and lower plates return to the non-deformed state.

64. (Previously Presented) The article of footwear of Claim 55, wherein the void between the upper and lower plates allow the plates to deform to a height of the void.